

# REVIVAL

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**Teaching Title:** The Absolutes of Scripture

- I. Revival Culture
  - a. We are pursuing authentic, wildfire, life-giving, demon-evicting revival!
    - i. We have NEVER been this way before!
  - b. Revival requires raw, risky belief.
    - i. *“And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”* (1 Corinthians 2:3–5, ESV)
      1. My passion is for God to encounter me in ways my natural, logical, intellectual capacities could never predict, gauge or moderate.
        - a. *“Routine is the breeding ground of the religious spirit.”* - Jeremiah Johnson
      2. The moment I limit this to my understanding or my careful analysis is the moment I've diminished my hope of moving into the spiritual realm that exists beyond what can be grasped.
        - a. *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”* (Proverbs 3:5, ESV)
        - b. Resurrection power can elude us if we aren't careful.
          - i. *“but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.”* (Luke 24:11–12, ESV)
  - c. As we unapologetically endorse zeal for the Word of God, and the supremacy of Scripture, the pursuit of revival demands much grace as we all work this out together.
    - i. Many aspects of an outpouring and the preparation of an outpouring will cause us to struggle and wrestle, emotionally, intellectually and theologically. This is by design.
    - ii. And, yes, mistakes will be made.
      1. Story of Dearborn and God telling us he was going to teach us how to steward revival.
        - a. Sharp rebuke from leaders.
        - b. We had never been that way before.
    - iii. It's better to be humble and wrong than being religious and right.
    - iv. *“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.”* (Proverbs 11:2, ESV)

- v. *“But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.””* (James 4:6, ESV)

## II. Bereans

- a. We often hear people claim to be doing the work of the Bereans when they stand in opposition to a supernatural event.
  - i. Instead of an immediate critique and a suspicious heart, I propose we should be cautiously excited about a possible fresh move of God.
- b. I believe many who promote themselves as Bereans are actually more like Thessalonians. Paul was preaching about a powerful, fresh move of God at Thessalonica:
  - i. *<sup>2</sup> And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” <sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. <sup>5</sup> But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. <sup>6</sup> And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, <sup>7</sup> and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” **Acts 17:2-7 (ESV)***
    - 1. There was an urgent and immediate rejection of the report of resurrection power. Let’s contrast this with the pure hearts of the Bereans:
  - ii. *10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. 13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. Acts 17:10-13 (ESV)*
    - 1. This is a powerful passage of scripture!
    - 2. The Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica.
      - a. This is an important point! Why were they more noble?
      - b. When they heard the report of a powerful, transforming, new move of God that would change everything in their lives, they received the word with all eagerness!

- c. Their response was not scrutiny, unbelief, jealousy or resistance. They were excited to hear the news!
      - d. They were so impacted by the potential of such a report that they immediately dove into the Word with the hope of confirming—not disproving—the life altering revelation!
    - 3. But then, in verse 13, we see the unrelenting Thessalonians actually traveling to Berea to gather people to them in opposition to what God was doing there.
- III. Spectrum of Ministry
  - a. I originally was introduced to this concept by Ted Haggard.
    - i. The skeleton of this outline is from his book *Primary Purpose*.
    - ii. He grew a prayer-driven, mission-focused, life-giving church to over 14,000 people by adhering to the principle of this message.
    - iii. He didn't sacrifice their core values and he didn't divide over the lesser issues.
    - iv. "Making it hard for people from Colorado Springs to go to Hell."
  - b. The younger you are in the Lord, the more black and white Christianity is.
    - i. Also, the more prophetic and apostolic you are, the more black and white it is.
  - c. While, of course, there are hard and fast truths that are, in fact, black and white, there are many more interpretations that are not.
    - i. They are debatable.
  - d. We are human.
    - i. Someone can be pure, passionate and determined regarding a theology, a ministry style or any number of beliefs, while not being entirely correct.
      - 1. If this is the case, we should not point the finger and divide.
      - 2. We must have grace.
      - 3. We ourselves must remain teachable.
  - e. Understand, I'm not talking about heresy.
    - i. We don't casually deal with heretical or dangerous teaching.
    - ii. But for lesser issues, we have grace.
      - 1. I don't name names, unless:
        - a. Their position is heretical and/or threatens people's eternities
        - b. God gives me that assignment
      - iii. I'm not saying we are to be passive or permissive.
      - iv. You'll understand better as we continue.
  - f. When discussing ministry styles, it's important that we identify exactly where the particular topic rests within the whole spectrum.
    - i. Let me explain.
    - ii. I believe there are several different levels in which we can examine structure or style of ministry.

- iii. Most church bickering and splits would be eliminated if we understood this. Unity would thrive and the Great Commission would be more quickly achievable.
  - iv. Rupertus Meldenus, a German theologian from the early seventeenth century said, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”
    - 1. Mark Ross: We can’t lock ourselves up in very small groups with maximal agreement on doctrine and morals, and then separate from others and refuse to acknowledge as Christians those who do not embrace all our distinctives.
- IV. Absolutes
- a. Every Christian church must agree on the absolutes.
    - i. If a church doesn’t accept an absolute, it would certainly not be considered Christian.
    - ii. Absolutes include the fact that Jesus is God, he rose from the dead, salvation only comes through him, there is one true God, Jesus is coming again, sin separates us from eternal life, belief in the trinity, etc.
    - iii. We can never sacrifice an absolute.
    - iv. We must never waiver from our position here.
    - v. Churches that endorse the absolutes can get together for prayer, fellowship, etc.
    - vi. Examples of this are worship concerts, days of prayer, etc.
    - vii. In Colorado Springs we had the nations largest National Day of Prayer event.
      - 1. Thousands got together to pray for our city in a downtown park.
      - 2. We all agreed on the absolutes.
  - b. Example: An Arlington, Virginia, minister said, “We have closed our minds to such trivial considerations as the question of the resurrection of Christ. If you fundamentalists wish to believe that nonsense, we have no objections, but we have more important things to preach than the presence or absence of an empty tomb 20 centuries old.”
    - i. Recently a well-known revivalist (Don’t share name: Damon Thompson) stated quite clearly in a video that he believes that Hell is “lightly populated” and that you can get saved after death.
    - ii. Unless he brings clarity or repents from this position, this would be a violation of an absolute. Unity cannot exist.
    - iii. Other violations of absolutes include Universalism, false-grace theology, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witness, liberal theology, etc.
- V. Interpretations
- a. Next on the list, resting on the foundation of absolutes, are interpretations. Hermeneutics.
    - i. Hermeneutics refers to the philosophical study of interpretation.

1. Britannica: [Literal interpretation](#) asserts that a biblical text is to be interpreted according to the “plain meaning” conveyed by its grammatical construction and historical [context](#). The literal meaning is held to correspond to the intention of the authors.
2. Other types of hermeneutics (interpretation), in addition to literal, include moral and allegorical.
- ii. These are scriptures, that we form opinions or, quite often, doctrines on.
- iii. They are always taken within the context of a specific passage.
  1. Context, setting, etc. must be taken into consideration.
- iv. Scripture interprets Scripture.
  1. We interpret the implicit by the explicit and the cloudy through the clear.
  2. The clear passages interpret the more difficult passages.
  3. The main teachings (the absolutes) are clear.
    - a. Other teachings of Scripture require interpretation.
    - b. Different types of Scripture require a different approach for interpretation.
      - i. Narrative, poetry, history, prophecy, a letter
      - ii. What were the original hearers supposed to hear?
- v. *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”* (2 Timothy 3:16–17, ESV)
  1. Growing in the Word requires teaching, correction, training, etc.
- vi. Interpretations are typically focused ideas, but since they are interpretations, there can sometimes be disagreement.
  1. The problem is when we allow this disagreement to divide the church.
- vii. Examples of interpretations can be:
  1. Speaking in tongues
  2. Pre-trib rapture
  3. Prophecy is not for today
  4. Apostles and prophets
  5. Women in ministry
  6. Literal days of creation
  7. Literal vs symbolic interpretation of the end times (Revelation)
- viii. Since these aren’t absolutes, it’s ok to disagree.
  1. It’s tragic when people deem certain movements and people as ‘false teachers’ because they disagree with them over interpretation.

## VI. Deductions

- a. Deductions are broader and more general than interpretations.

- i. You can arrive at a deduction when you read a larger portion of several passages of scripture.
  1. Most Christian books are deductive.
  2. You consider several points and then remove what doesn't sync with the rest.
  3. Topical studies are an example of a deductive Bible study.
    - a. You focus on one topic and then scour Scripture to find supporting material.
  4. On the contrary, an inductive Bible study will take one verse or passage and break it down further.
    - a. You could say inductive study is in the realm of interpretations while a deductive study would be, of course, deductions.
    - b. Inductive is more reliable which is why division at the level of deductions is much more common and destructive.
- ii. Deductions rely more on eisegesis the exegesis.
  1. Eisegesis = reading into the text and relying on personal insight. (Bible commentaries, sermons, etc.)
  2. Exegesis = the exposition or explanation of a text based on a careful, objective analysis.
- iii. For example, a deduction may be that any gathering of two or three qualifies as the Ekklesia based on Matthew 18.
  1. You'd add to that other scriptures that show that Jesus affirmed the small group.
  2. He had 12 disciples.
  3. You could really preach this by emphasizing that just a few rallied around the cross when Jesus died.
  4. However, the premise began (in my opinion) incorrectly, which caused the ultimate deduction to be flawed.
  5. So, we have small groups all over presuming to be functioning as the ultimate picture of the Ekklesia.
  6. Yet they have failed dramatically in considering greater truths of Ekklesia.
- iv. Another deduction could be that "all things work together for good..."
  1. You could piece together supporting scriptures about God's goodness and his desire for victory in our lives.
  2. While the ultimate message wouldn't violate an absolute of Scripture, the actual truth of the message is flawed.
  3. This results in teachings about the character of God and our expected victory that are not accurate.

- v. Other deductions, based on careful studies, can in fact be absolutely true.  
Accurate.
  - vi. Doctrines should never be made on deduction alone, but there is much liberty to allow your ministry to include deductions as long as they agree with and enhance the absolutes.
  - vii. As with interpretations, it's certainly negative to identify deductions as unbiblical when they in fact don't contradict an absolute.
- VII. Expressions
- a. Expressions are typically connected to an actual encounter or intense revelation of God.
  - b. They are often experienced by a significant portion of the church body.
    - i. Manifestations
      - 1. Many Christians renounce them.
      - 2. Others affirm them.
      - 3. We must understand the difference between unbiblical and extrabiblical.
      - 4. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”* (John 14:12, ESV)
      - 5. *“Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”* (John 21:25, ESV)
    - ii. Prophecy
      - 1. Many are extremely nervous about prophecy.
      - 2. We prophesy in part.
    - iii. Encounters
      - 1. A person wrote a book about going to heaven that we shared in the church.
        - a. Someone in the church was disturbed and point blank called them a liar.
        - b. To their credit, they didn't allow this to affect their participation at all.
    - iv. Discernment
      - 1. We need a message on discernment.
      - 2. We don't discern with our eyes.
      - 3. We don't discern motive.
      - 4. We discern spirits (those who have the gift).
      - 5. Jennifer Eivaz: One of the first things the Holy Spirit told me about the gift of discerning of spirits is to not judge people when you discern the

negative. It's a redemptive gift. You have to walk in the highest level of love to be effective.

## VIII. Subjective Opinions

- a. Broader still, subjective opinions are arrived at by individuals that experience certain insight when searching the scriptures coupled with living out what they find.
  - i. Of course, subjective opinions must always agree with absolutes and must not contradict scripture, or they must be thrown out.
  - ii. Subjective opinions may include dreams, visions, encounters, miracles or other experiences that emphasize general truth or the character and nature of God.
    1. Some argue that people who don't pray in tongues or who don't have dreams and visions or who don't work miracles aren't saved.
    2. Those who have not done this can form a subjective opinion that not everyone functions in those gifts.
    3. Or, those who have done this can form a subjective opinion that all must function in those gifts. (Gift projection)
    4. Others who have struggled with sickness, form theologies that Jesus' death and resurrection didn't include healing.
      - a. My parents were this way.
      - b. It was devastating.
    5. Or struggling with lack and poverty might cause someone to renounce any measure of financial prosperity.
  - iii. We must seek God, seek the Word of God, get sharpened, die to self and learn how to experience God and how the Scriptures affirm what we are experiencing...or to be challenged when our philosophies and experiences aren't lined up with Scripture.
  - iv. Discovering what works best in your situation at this level should never be accepted as absolute truth, or even as a deduction.

## IX. Personal Preferences

- a. Personal preferences may have less to do with controversial scriptural matters and more to do with personality and strategy.
  - i. Do we want small groups or not?
  - ii. How long should the service be?
  - iii. Do we prefer expository teaching or topical?
  - iv. Do we want contemporary worship or hymns?
  - v. The Bible is usually silent on such preferences.

## X. Feelings

- a. Feelings would include simply what we like and don't like.
  - i. Can you believe there have been church splits on this level??!

- ii. The color of the carpet to dim the lights during worship or not has more to do with atmosphere than with anything else.

## XI. Cultural Norms

- a. This simply has to do with the style and system of a particular culture.
  - i. For example, you'll hear shouts in an African-American church while it may be more subdued in another style of church.
  - ii. In Haiti, their services in 100 degree weather, outside, lasted nearly five hours.
  - iii. In China, the underground church will sit for twelve hours of straight teaching.
  - iv. You will also find a lot of cultural difference between different denominations and different socio-economic classes.
    - 1. Dallas pastor had to choose between being an inner city, multi-lingual church and a suburban church in a wealthy community.
    - 2. They determined their culture would struggle in the inner city.
  - v. If every church had the same culture, then there would be a large segment of society that would not be reached.

## XII. Functional Mandate

- a. Lastly, the vision of the house must be understood.
  - i. Ted Haggard told Dutch Sheets that his church would grow much faster if he didn't focus on the prophetic as much.
    - 1. Ted was probably right, however, the culture of Dutch's church demanded a focus on the prophetic. It was their functional mandate.
  - ii. On the contrary, Dutch said he "didn't want to attend another church picnic," he wanted his next assignment.
    - 1. In Dutch's church it was clear that he didn't do hospital visitations, he wasn't sociable, he didn't connect with most in his church. It was his mandate, they were ultra focused, and they never grew beyond 500 people or so. They didn't need to.
    - 2. In Ted's church, it was the opposite. He was a pastor's pastor.
- b. Some leaders are called to function apostolically or prophetically, like Dutch Sheets, instead of pastorally.
  - i. The vision demands a specialized focus which means other ministry focuses, by design, are not established.
  - ii. This doesn't mean that church doesn't value pastoral ministry. It means it's not their assignment nor do they have the gifting to pull it off.
- c. Secret Prayer failed when we violated our mandate by going to churches that didn't affirm praying in tongues and when we allowed pastors to start speaking.
  - i. It didn't mean we didn't love and appreciate pastors and churches that didn't affirm tongues, but it did mean the entirety of the assignment was to pray in tongues for two hours every Friday night in a different church in the city.

1. The movement was focused and intentional and some chose not to participate, and that was okay.
- ii. Much offense, schisms, gossip, complaints and splits occur at this final level.
  1. When someone's favorite ministry expression isn't validated, they get offended.
  2. When a ministry focus is too challenging, people drop out.
  3. When the vision of the house doesn't cover a broad spectrum, accusations can fly.
- iii. What happens, all too often, is pastors and leaders succumb to the pressure and lay down the vision and start operating beyond their authority and their calling.
  1. They burn out and the people are frustrated because they don't have the gifting to do what they demand.
  2. They then argue that other leaders should have been brought on to meet their demands, while not understanding it would still take the church beyond the realm of their assignment.
  3. So, instead of specialized forces, we have cookie cutter churches that try to do it all.
  4. The city church will solve this, but that's another message for another time.

### XIII. Conclusion

- a. Sometimes scripture doesn't demand something be done a certain way.
  - i. If we all focus on the absolutes and resist creating divisions based on lower levels, we will certainly have a powerful army ready and equipped to accomplish the Great Commission.
  - ii. Someone once said, "I don't have to attend every argument I'm invited to."
- b. Understand, I am all for discussion.
  - i. Iron sharpens iron.
  - ii. But sometimes, the scripture remains silent or vague.
  - iii. As long as we do everything we can to create healthy churches, we have a lot of freedom to work it many different ways.
- c. Separate worshipping bodies divided by these disagreements may not mean schism, therefore disagreement & difference in faith & practice does not eliminate unity in Christ.
- d. Again, as I started, I again need to make it clear.
  - i. To connect with full force in a church, it critical to believe in the absolutes, to be mostly in sync with the interpretations and to embrace the culture.
  - ii. For example, in churches we've led, we promoted in fiery tongues.
    1. While we have brothers and sisters who do not believe the same way, few would be able to thrive there.



2. The same is true if we were to connect in a church that didn't affirm the gift of tongues.
  - e. So, we contend with passion according to our calling and culture while appreciating others who have interpreted and deduced differently.
    - i. Their direction doesn't affect our mission.
    - ii. You do you, we'll do what God has called us to do and we'll all love each other in the process.